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SUBJECT: NORTH KIVU UPDATE (9/18/07 15:00 GMT): SITUATION  
UNCHANGED

REF: KINSHASA 1098

¶1. (U) The security situation in North Kivu remains unchanged as of September 18. Government troops and forces loyal to renegade General Laurent Nkunda continue to consolidate their positions throughout the province. There have been no reports of significant fighting since combat ceased near Sake some 20 miles west of Goma September 7. MONUC peacekeepers are still conducting patrols in Rutshuru and Masisi territories, as well as around Goma.

¶2. (U) The GDRC has publicly declared it has no intention of negotiating with Nkunda to end the current crisis. Speaking to members of the diplomatic corps in Kinshasa September 15, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Alan Lubamba called Nkunda a "war criminal," and identified as such by the UN. Lubamba said the GDRC rejected the UNSC's recent appeal to begin a dialogue with Nkunda, but he assured the assembled diplomats the government wanted to work with the international community to find a "lasting solution" to the problems of the Great Lakes region.

¶3. (U) Four journalists were detained and questioned by the Congolese military (FARDC) outside Goma September 14 reportedly for meeting with Nkunda at his base in Masisi. One American from the Christian Science Monitor, two Congolese working for Voice of America, and one Rwandan correspondent from the newspaper New Times were stopped by FARDC troops outside Sake. Press reports claimed soldiers confiscated the journalists' equipment and notes and escorted them to military intelligence headquarters in Goma. The group was questioned and subsequently released, although without their belongings. FARDC deputy regional military commander Col. Delphin Kahimbi told MONUC's Radio Okapi there was no official interrogation of the journalists, and that they were detained simply to determine what they were going to report about Nkunda. Kahimbi justified his actions by citing the June Tripartite Plus agreement calling on regional governments to deny media access to negative forces.

¶4. (SBU) Radio Okapi reported on September 17 that about 40 Nkunda loyalists had turned themselves over to the FARDC. In fact, MONUC military officials in Goma said they could not verify the exact number of defections, adding that Okapi's report was "a bit high." The same officials noted, however, that "several" former Nkunda soldiers had surrendered to pro-government forces on September 14-15 in the Masisi area.

¶5. (U) A government delegation, headed by the Ministers of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Affairs, and Press and Information, visited Goma and Sake September 16. Speaking to civilians in Sake, Information Minister Tshilombo Send said

the visit aimed to gain first-hand information that would be directly conveyed to President Kabila. Tshilombo said Kabila is fully aware of the suffering people are enduring. He stated Kabila believes military integration is the only solution to the problem of Nkunda and is prepared to continue military operations to force the dissident general's forces to disarm and integrate.

16. (U) Post will continue to monitor the situation in North Kivu. This is our last daily report; future reports will be issued as developments warrant.  
BROCK